

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in this application.

Listing of Claims:

1-7. (Canceled)

8. (Currently Amended) A process for making a catalytic converter for cleaning exhaust gas, comprising the steps of:

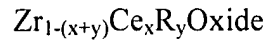
performing preliminary baking of a zirconium oxide at a temperature of not lower than 700°C for causing a decrease in specific surface area of the zirconium oxide, the preliminarily baked zirconium oxide still maintaining a specific surface area of no less than 40m²/g; and

coating the ~~preliminary~~ preliminarily baked zirconium oxide on a heat-resistant support together with at least one kind of catalytically active substance.

9. (Canceled)

10. (Currently Amended) The process according to claim 8, wherein the preliminarily baked zirconium ~~complex~~ oxide is first treated to support the catalytically active substance and then coated on the heat-resistant support.

11. (Original) The process according to claim 8, wherein the zirconium oxide is a zirconium complex oxide represented by the following formula,



where R represents a rare earth element other than Ce or an alkaline earth metal, the zirconium complex oxide meeting $0.12 \leq x \leq 0.25$ and $0.02 \leq y \leq 0.15$ in said formula.

12. (Original) The process according to claim 8, wherein the catalytically active substance is selected from a group consisting of Pt, Rh and Pd.

13. (New) A process for making a catalytic converter for cleaning exhaust gas, comprising the steps of:

performing preliminary baking of a zirconium oxide for causing a decrease in specific surface area of the zirconium oxide; and

coating the preliminarily baked zirconium oxide on a heat-resistant support together with at least one kind of catalytically active substance,

wherein the zirconium oxide is a zirconium complex oxide represented by the following formula,



where R represents a rare element other than Ce or an alkaline earth metal, the zirconium complex oxide meeting $0.12 \leq x \leq 0.25$ and $0.02 \leq y \leq 0.15$ in said formula.

14. (New) The process according to claim 13, wherein the preliminary baking step is performed at a temperature of not lower than 700°C.

Serial No.: 10/726,193
Art Unit: 1754
Inventor: Mari YAMAMOTO et al.

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15. (New) The process according to claim 13, wherein the preliminarily baked zirconium oxide is first treated to support the catalytically active substance and then coated on the heat-resistant support.

16. (New) The process according to claim 13, wherein the catalytically active substance is selected from a group consisting of Pt, Rh and Pd.